

Getting Letters of Recommendation

Presented by the Psychology Student Study Center



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Why do I need a letter of rec?

- Graduate school applications
- Internships
- Scholarships/grants
- Study abroad
- Jobs/work opportunities (e.g., PRO Guide)

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Selecting Letter Writers



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Who to ask?

- Usually need three
- At least one should be affiliated with the field to which you are applying
- Professors vs lecturers vs graduate students?



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Who to ask?



- People who know you well
- People who have directly observed your skills and characteristics across multiple contexts (e.g., classroom, research, teaching assistantship, internship, extracurricular leadership positions, employment, etc.)
- People who can write a STRONG letter!

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Write down (or think of) THREE people you could ask for a letter of rec right now.

- Were you able to come up with three?
- What would they be able to write about you?

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Developing Connections

What if none of my professors know me very well?

- ▶ Attend office hours (or make an appt)
- ▶ Participate in class
- ▶ Email to share resources or connections you made from class
- ▶ Share what impact the class has had on you
- ▶ Ask about opportunities to work together (e.g., research assistantship)
- ▶ Follow through, return emails, be proactive



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What do you want your letter writers to say about you?

▶ Jot down your answers...

What can you start doing now to enable them to observe those things?

What is one thing you will do this week to establish a better connection to a potential letter writer?

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Addressing Anxiety

- ▶ We EXPECT students to request letters of recommendation. This is not a favor we do, this is part of our job.
- ▶ We will not be suspicious that you're just using us for a future letter of rec.
- ▶ If we don't feel we can write you a strong letter, then we will tell you. The worst we can say is no!

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How to ask?

Let's Talk

				
Schedule Schedule an appointment to discuss your plans	Discuss Discuss your grad school (or relevant) plans in person/phone/Zoom and if it seems like a good fit, then ask if they would be interested in writing you a strong letter of rec.	Explain Be prepared to explain why you think they are a good fit (not just "you seem nice so I'm asking you")	Timeline Be prepared to provide a timeline - when do you need the letters completed?	Timeframe Try to give your letter writers a month notice before you need the first letter.

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Asking by email



If you MUST ask by email, provide the following:

- ▶ Context for the message (e.g., "As you may know, I'm applying to grad programs in social work...")
- ▶ Explain why they are a good fit (e.g., "Given your expertise in social work / clinical practice / youth development / intervention planning, I'd like to ask if you would be willing to write a strong recommendation on my behalf.")
- ▶ Provide some information (e.g., "I've attached a preliminary outline of my statement of purpose to give you a better idea of my goals.")
- ▶ Request follow-up (e.g., "Thank you for your time and consideration, I am happy to schedule a phone/Zoom call to discuss my request. I look forward to hearing from you.")
- ▶ Any other materials (e.g., "I've attached my statement of purpose and resume. Are there any other materials that may assist you...?")

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What Materials should you provide?



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Provide the following

- ▶ List of schools, programs, and due dates for the letter
- ▶ Statement of purpose
- ▶ CV and/or Resume
- ▶ Date you met and how you met
- ▶ A list of roles and responsibilities they have observed you in
- ▶ A list of points you'd like them to mention
- ▶ Information about any rough spots in your application
- ▶ Anything else they ask for



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Waiving your right to review your letters of rec

- ▶ Many letter writers will not provide a letter without this

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Communication & Scheduling

Check in periodically.

If your timeline changes, be sure to reach out to your letter writers and let them know.

A few days before the letters are due, send them a brief reminder.

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Plugging the PSSC

<https://cla.csulb.edu/departments/psychology/psychology-student-study-center/>

- ▶ What do we offer?
 - ▶ Workshops
 - ▶ Virtual office hours – drop in anytime!
 - ▶ Writing help
 - ▶ Tutoring
 - ▶ Academic support (when in person, room 314) – computers, tables/workspace, small library, other resources
- ▶ Contact Dr. Kohfeldt at Danielle.Kohfeldt@csulb.edu if you have questions or ideas for future workshops.

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